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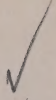
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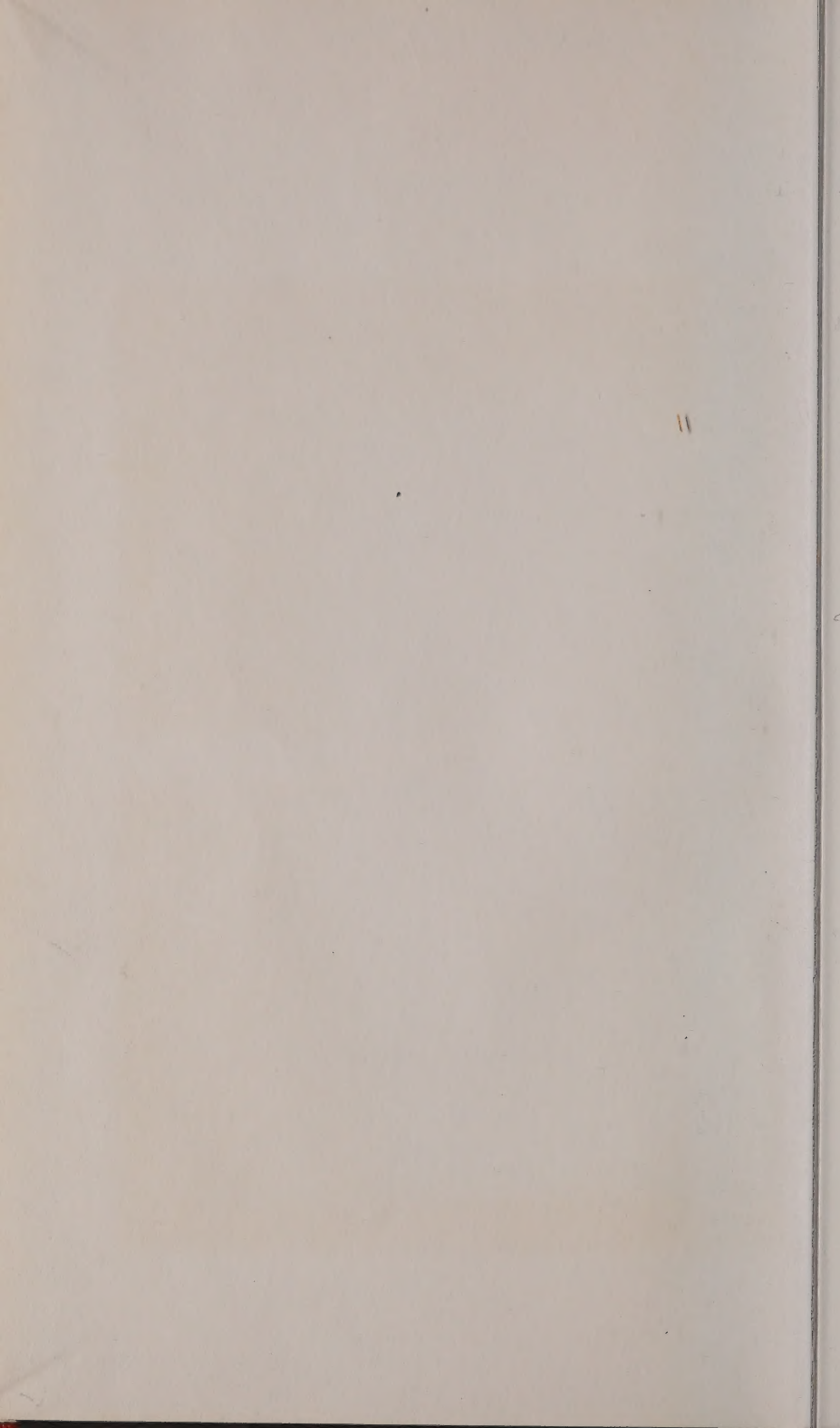
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South Wayne

by

Frank D. Walter

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South Wayne, Indiana

by

Frank D. Walter

edited by

Rex M. Potterf

Director of Historical Research

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FOREWORD

The factual basis for this account of the now legendary town of South Wayne is an article by Frank D. Walter, published in the FORT WAYNE DAILY NEWS November 10, 1908. The article was somewhat prolix and included much material now no longer pertinent. We have taken the liberty therefore to rewrite the article. We have taken no similar liberty with Mr. Walter's facts. Therefore, Mr. Walter must be credited as the source of this account of South Wayne.

Rex M. Potterf
Director of Historical Research



The once unincorporated village of South Wayne comprised the area bounded by Calhoun Avenue on the east and Creighton Avenue on the north. Youngsters of the 1860's and 1870's roamed this paradise and engaged in swimming, nutting, fishing and in clandestine visitations to orchards and fields of melons. Perhaps it was the knowledge of this enchanted woodland which caused these same persons, later, when mature, to perpetuate their memories by the establishment of the town of South Wayne, now an integral part of Fort Wayne and long forgotten as a separate entity. South Wayne enjoyed a brief independence with some archaic overtones of interest to contemporary students of Fort Wayne antiquities.

South Wayne proper comprised the territory in the farms formerly belonging to the Ewing, Thompson, and Fairfield estates. Asa Fairfield, father of Cyrus Fairfield, for a long time was the oldest living resident of South Wayne. He then possessed the title of the "Father of South Wayne." Asa Fairfield, a retired sea captain, while on active duty made his home at Kennebunk Port, Maine; he feared the continuing siren call of a sailor's life and decided that he could best resist it many miles inland. He migrated west and arrived in Fort Wayne in 1833. In 1834 he acquired land in section 11, from Benjamin B. Kerchival and Ann Turner, who had entered the land. The purchase price was \$1,800 for 160 acres. Within six months he moved his family to this city. Cyrus Fairfield then was but six months of age.

Asa Fairfield lived the life of a farmer until his death. He was both prosperous and prominent

in the community. He made a success of tilling the soil, in spite of the fact that he undertook that occupation rather late in life. His farm with other acquisitions ultimately comprised 240 acres. He also owned the first canal boat on the Wabash-Erie Canal which he himself built and called the "Indiana." It made its first trip to Huntington on July 4, 1834. As a coincidence, later, the first car on the interurban line from Huntington to Fort Wayne was likewise called the "Indiana."

Asa Fairfield found only a log house on his land. About 1839 he built the first frame house in that section. Only two or three families lived in the vicinity. The site of this house was long occupied by Willis J. Pearce, on Creighton Avenue. The latter had built it on the foundations of that pioneer of frame houses in South Wayne. In 1845 Asa Fairfield began to sell his farm in eight and ten acre lots. Likewise, the farms of the Ewing and Thompson estates were also subdivided.

When Cyrus Fairfield was a boy, the Indians of the Miami tribe were occupants of the reservation south of the city; many exciting episodes occurred incident to a life with these neighbors. On government payday, after receiving their money, the Miamis loved to ride by the hundreds, at breakneck speed, on their wiry little ponies, across the territory of South Wayne to the saloon of "Old Chief Godfrey," as he was called. There they perfected an inebriated condition which would have shamed the proverbial "lord."

The wild pigeons of those early days made the sycamore trees along the banks of the St. Mary's their rendezvous. An early resident of South Wayne reported that he was awakened by the noise of the breaking of limbs, borne down by the weight of the birds.

Wild hogs abounded in the woods and territory between what is now DeWald and Taylor streets and Broadway and Oakland streets. That was known as "the hog pasture." Corral traps were built to catch the

animals alive and many of them fell prey. Wolves, likewise, were plentiful and local farmers too set wolf traps to catch them. On one occasion Asa Fairfield captured a man in one of his traps, the latter being on a marauding expedition that included in its itinerary the Fairfield sheep pen. The culprit's cries awoke the household in the night; he was never prosecuted, as he preferred to leave the country because of the threat of exposure.

For a number of years General Lawton resided with his uncle, who owned a farm near Browning's Mill. He was prominent in the early social life of the vicinity and Mrs. Cyrus Fairfield recalled many incidents of his early life, as a country boy. His uncle was the maker of a salve, which was widely used at that time, and which, according to the early residents, was very efficacious. Many customers of this nostrum sighed for its recipe but so far as is known it died with the uncle.

Ague was prevalent; quinine was as necessary and as regular an item as the staples of diet. Every fence was decorated with advertising notices of Ayres Ague cure. Nevertheless, South Wayne went right on shaking.

The Allen County infirmary stood for many years at the corner of Savilla Avenue and Broadway; it was a frame building of few comforts and conveniences, although well maintained. After its abandonment it became a target for local boys who eventually pulled it to pieces.

One of the features of metropolitan South Wayne was the plank-road running from the Wabash track, south to Savilla Avenue. This was a distance of exactly one-half mile and was a favorite speedway. It served as a course for many an exciting race in the dusk of the evening.

Another interesting place that lived in the minds of all the old-timers of South Wayne was the tavern, kept by Peter Rodgers, on Broadway, near Home Avenue.

A brickyard was nearby. A small creek bore the name and glory of "Bloody Run," because of a murder once committed on its bank. The Wabash gravel pit, where the Randall Mill later stood, was another favorite spot for the youngsters. H. C. Jesse and Hugh Rockhill were local farmers during the years 1872 and 1873. They rented and lived on the Thompson farm at that time. B. D. Miner was the agent for the Ewing estate and lived on Broadway, near Lincoln Avenue.

Ernest W. Cook (1861-1932), one of the prominent members of "the gang," later secretary of the Citizen's Trust Company and a member of the Fort Wayne Board of School Trustees, had a good memory and related facts concerning his life, spent from boyhood, in South Wayne, where he long resided. He said:

My father purchased a lot on Broadway and erected thereon a house of three small rooms in 1862. At that time we lived on Lafayette Street, and there were very few houses, between Lafayette and Broadway. The house he built is still standing and is located at 2214 Broadway. I believe it to be the oldest house on Broadway, between Taylor Street and the bridge crossing the St. Mary's River. Broadway was then called the Indianapolis State road. Asa Fairfield, the father of Cyrus, owned a farm of about 200 acres upon which he erected his home. The only houses around there that I can remember was that of Edward F. Colerick, situated near the Wabash track, the Dr. Thompson homestead, B. B. Miner's house, situated near the corner of what is now Lincoln Avenue and Broadway and the Fairfield house. Asa Fairfield sold part of his farm to C. D. Bond, father of Charles E. Bond, S. B. Bond, Judge Ninde, Judge Taylor, and George Fox, father of Louis Fox along 1860, and their houses were built shortly afterwards. The ground along the banks of Shawnee Run was a swamp in which a great many plum trees were scattered.

St. Mary's River had several times as much water in it as it has today and we used to catch thousands upon thousands of bass, pickerel and suckers. About 1870 wild pigeons flew over that part of the city by the millions and it was no trick at all to sit on a stump and shoot them as they flew over us.

The prairie west of the city, which is now largely cultivated, was an immense swamp in the midst of which was a lake called Bear Lake. I believe one of the proudest moments of my life was when I shot six prairie chickens, and instead of going directly home, I went down town and marched up Calhoun Street with them on my back. Between Lafayette Street and Broadway there was a fringe of houses along the railroad track, that part lying east of Calhoun being called 'Frenchtown' and that west of Calhoun 'Irishtown.' A great deal of jealousy existed between these two factions, and there were frequent fights between these two gangs, as they were called. On Broadway, adjoining the Wabash tracks was a factory which manufactured soap and candles, which did a thriving business. This factory was owned by Cyrus Fairfield. A stove factory was also in existence for a number of years, on the Wabash tracks, just west of Broadway. Beyond that was a stirrup factory, run by Byron Thompson. These were torn down and abandoned years ago. The nearest grocery to our house was the one on the corner of Broadway and Jefferson streets, owned by a man named Strong.

The boys now living in the city with whom I played during my youth are John, Stephen and Samuel Morris, George and William Miner, Charles Colerick, Harry and Dan Ninde and the Rockhill boys. The latter lived on the Thompson farm in 1872-73. Judge Heaton and Judge Vesey moved to South Wayne later, Judge Heaton coming from Marion Township, where he was teaching school, and Judge Vesey from Decatur, where he practiced law a short time. If anyone wants to know

how much an evergreen tree will grow in a certain number of years, they can look at those in the front yard of my old house, 2214 Broadway, as I helped plant them in 1864, at which time they were about three feet high. The home in which I now live is the old Colerick homestead remodeled. The father of A. J. Moynihan lived on the east side of Broadway in an old orchard, and for years afterwards lived on the corner of Wall Street and Broadway until his death. Alex McCulloch, either a brother or uncle of Charles McCulloch, lived, at one time, in a frame house just south of the Jewish graveyard, which is now a part of McCulloch Park. An open ditch ran from Calhoun Street down Baker Street, connecting with Shawnee Run near Broadway.

John Ferguson, who came to Allen County in 1855, and worked for Asa Fairfield, also related many interesting points of early history as did Byron Thompson, who was a close second to Cyrus Fairfield for the title of "Oldest living resident of South Wayne."

The gang of boys known as the "South Wayne Gang" included the sons of men prominent in the early days of Fort Wayne. They became equally prominent in the community when they attained manhood. Albert H. Cook, a school teacher of the district, was the father of Ernest W. Cook, secretary of the Citizens' Trust Company previously quoted; Judge John Morris, father of John, Stephen and Samuel L. Morris, later prominent attorneys; D. W. Jones, father of F. L. and Harvey Jones and Mrs. Ogden Pierce, names formerly well-known in business and social circles; B. D. Miner, father of William and George Miner; and Judge L. M. Ninde, whose sons Harry, Daniel and Lee Ninde, names widely known in legal circles, were all conspicuous personnel of early South Wayne juvenile society. Others of the old residents some of whose names are known, both locally and nationally, were Judge Fay, Judge R. S. Taylor, I. N.

Taylor, Cyrus Fairfield, Homer Hartman, John W. Haydes, Edward Colerick, Samuel Stophlet, Byron Thompson, Stephen B. Bond, Judge W. J. Vesey, Dr. Isaac Knapp, Captain Charles Every, Charles D. Bond, Aaron and Daniel Markley, William H. Briant, G. E. Bursley and John Ferguson. Other adolescents who played Indian and hooky and did all the other things that were to be done were August Riethmiller, later member of the city health board; Otto Briant, who left the city; Samuel Stophlet, later a resident of Kansas City; Charles Emery, who moved to Mexico; Mate Boomhoff; Charles E. Bond, vice-president of the Old National Bank; Thomas Hall, a conductor on the Pennsylvania Railroad; Otto and Oren, sons of Daniel Markley, and Wright, Howell, Jesse, and Hugh Rockhill.

All the estates of the persons previously mentioned were extensive and where many paved streets appear today, there were then corn fields, orchards and forest. After the St. Mary's River, which always had a most superior fascination, came Shawnee Run, with its swimming holes, its sunfish and many joys of woodland bank and rippling eddies. Running water coursed in Shawnee Run the year around. Beaver's Mill afterward Esmond's Mill, was a source of never failing interest to the boys; it shared honors with the wood yard, where the Wabash engines, woodburning at that time "fueled up." The Esmond Mill burned in 1870. A short trip of a half mile or so into the woods meant plenty of squirrel; for the older boys there was an occasional trip with their fathers to those happy hunting grounds, a few miles west, where they encountered snipe, quail, wild pigeons and an occasional deer.

The "high banks" was the favorite swimming place and the St. Mary's abounded in pike, bass and pickerel.

The boys stole pears from Judge Ninde's orchard. The grapes came from the arbors of Cyrus Fairfield and

apples and peaches were purloined from the many trees of the Thompson estate.

In the woods were hickory nuts, walnuts, beech-nuts and hazelnuts in profusion; plentiful orchards and melon patches met the demands of each youngster's ravening appetite.

Mrs. Knapp, wife of Dr. Knapp, a prominent and well-remembered dentist, was the angel of the neighborhood, the heroine of all the boys and loved by all the girls. She took an interest in every youngster who came within range; the cookies and cakes she dispensed encouraged a small army to find the range. It is not strange that the lads who knew these joys desired to preserve the memories and future joys for themselves and their children.

The idea of a separately incorporated South Wayne had been incited by agitation on the part of the citizens of Fort Wayne that South Wayne be taken into the city. Their neighbors across Creighton Avenue were paying a high tax rate; South Wayne residents believed the taxpayers of Fort Wayne enjoyed no commensurate privileges. They saw no reason why they should assume the debts of an old town and pay taxes for them when they could create a brand new town, start out with nothing, without debt and run things to suit themselves. Improvements were not coming as fast as they would like to have them, and not the way they would do it, etc. These seem to be the real reasons for South Wayne.

To Judge W. J. Vesey and Ernest W. Cook belong the honor of first having proposed the formation of a separate town; the suggestion coming from them was eagerly accepted. Soon the movement was making rapid progress toward realization. To the official originators of the idea fell the task of completing arrangements for the incorporation; conferences of the leading citizens of the suburb were soon under way.

The first meeting of the board was held on May

11, 1889. Previously, articles of incorporation had been filed. At this meeting Judge W. J. Vesey was unanimously elected board president, with a bond of \$1,500; Ernest W. Cook was chosen clerk and treasurer, and O. N. Heaton, Henry W. Ninde and W. J. Vesey were made trustees. They indulged in no frills or jollifications; they offered no condolences to Fort Wayne, across the border, at Creighton Avenue; the board merely proceeded directly to business. And it was right practical business. Hiram Poyser was ordered to move his fence back to the line on his lot, and Mart V. Connet, Hiram Reichart, E. A. Gildet and Dr. Sledd were ordered to build sidewalks. The board also ordered a bridge to be built over Shawnee Run, to replace the old one and appointed C. W. Spencer marshal. This officer's salary was fixed at fifteen cents per hour for each hour he worked; he was required to give bond.

The boundaries of the corporate town extended south from Creighton Avenue to Richardville Avenue, west of Hoagland Avenue to St. Mary's River.

On June 4, 1889 the board at its second meeting established the tax rates for the ensuing year. A rate of twenty cents of real and personal property was levied for road purposes and twenty-three cents for general purposes. Section No. 2 of the ordinance, which was introduced by President W. J. Vesey, provided for a license of \$150 for saloons.

The only saloon in South Wayne was conducted by a Mrs. Strodel. The way the citizens proceeded to dispose of the lady booze-dispenser would put to shame the efforts of any professional prohibitionist. They hired spies to watch her place for violations; in a very short time they had twenty affidavits prepared against her. Two of the affidavits were filed and she was fined on them.

A mutual agreement provided that if no more affidavits were filed she would retire from business.

Everybody agreed and Mrs. Strodel's place was soon a blight that lived only in the dreams of some of her old customers.

OTHER CORPORATE DOINGS

At first, council meetings were infrequent. Later, routine business increased and regular meetings became necessary. The board then met in regular session every three weeks. One of its first actions was the enactment of an ordinance forbidding owners of cattle to allow them to run at large. Ordering of repairs to existing sidewalks, the building of additional walks, the grading of streets and the requirement of sanitary vaults occurred in the early part of the life of the town.

A most valuable feature of the council's work was an ordinance requiring property owners to plant trees in front of their property. The act specified the kind, maple or elm, and distance apart and between sidewalk and street.

On October 22, 1889, the council authorized Edwin Miller, a grocer, whose place was at the corner of Lincoln and Indiana avenues, to build a second story on the structure to be used as a town hall at a monthly rental of \$6. The council moved into the new hall on December 3, 1889; the city fathers celebrated the occasion by ordering numerous property owners to build sidewalks. Routine business of this sort was the principal order: then the question of supplying gas for the town arose. At the meeting of October 7, 1890, Henry Horstmeyer and William Lawson were appointed a committee to confer with the Salamonie Gas Company with a view to a contract.

On January 9, 1891, Ernest W. Cook, who had been city clerk, resigned; the council elected Theodore Thorward in his stead. Mr. Cook left the town, remaining

away for several years.

On April 17, 1891, the council levied a road tax of \$2.40 on every voter in the town or the alternative of two days' work on the roads as an equivalent.

In December, 1893, the council entered a five-year contract with the Jenny Electric Light and Power Company to illuminate the streets from dusk until 1:00 A.M. at a cost to the town of \$30 per lamp per annum. Upon the resignation of Frank Burnett in 1894, as marshal, James S. Taylor was appointed in his stead.

On July 2, 1894, the council issued bonds for the construction of a water works system. Sixteen bonds of the value of \$1,000 each, bearing six per cent interest were offered. Purchasers for them appeared immediately. Thereafter, a contract for the placing of water mains in every street in the town, whether the property was occupied or not, was let to Byron S. Hattersley, in the amount of \$15,800. The contract was completed in October.

Soon the corporate life of South Wayne became vigorous and healthy; agitation for annexation of the town to Fort Wayne now became acute. Opposition had appeared to the formation of a town in the first place but as time passed the fight to make it come into Fort Wayne, became bitter. The residents of South Wayne had been challenged in their fight to remain a corporate town; the case was carried to the higher courts. Attorney J. M. Barrett won the battle for Fort Wayne and made further legal warfare impossible. Previously the Indiana law, as relating to cities, made it impossible for a town to annex new territory without the consent of a majority of the inhabitants of the territory. Mr. Barrett had influenced the Indiana State Legislature in enacting an amendment to this law, by which the consent of the inhabitants of that section for annexation was unnecessary.

For the previous year the residents of South

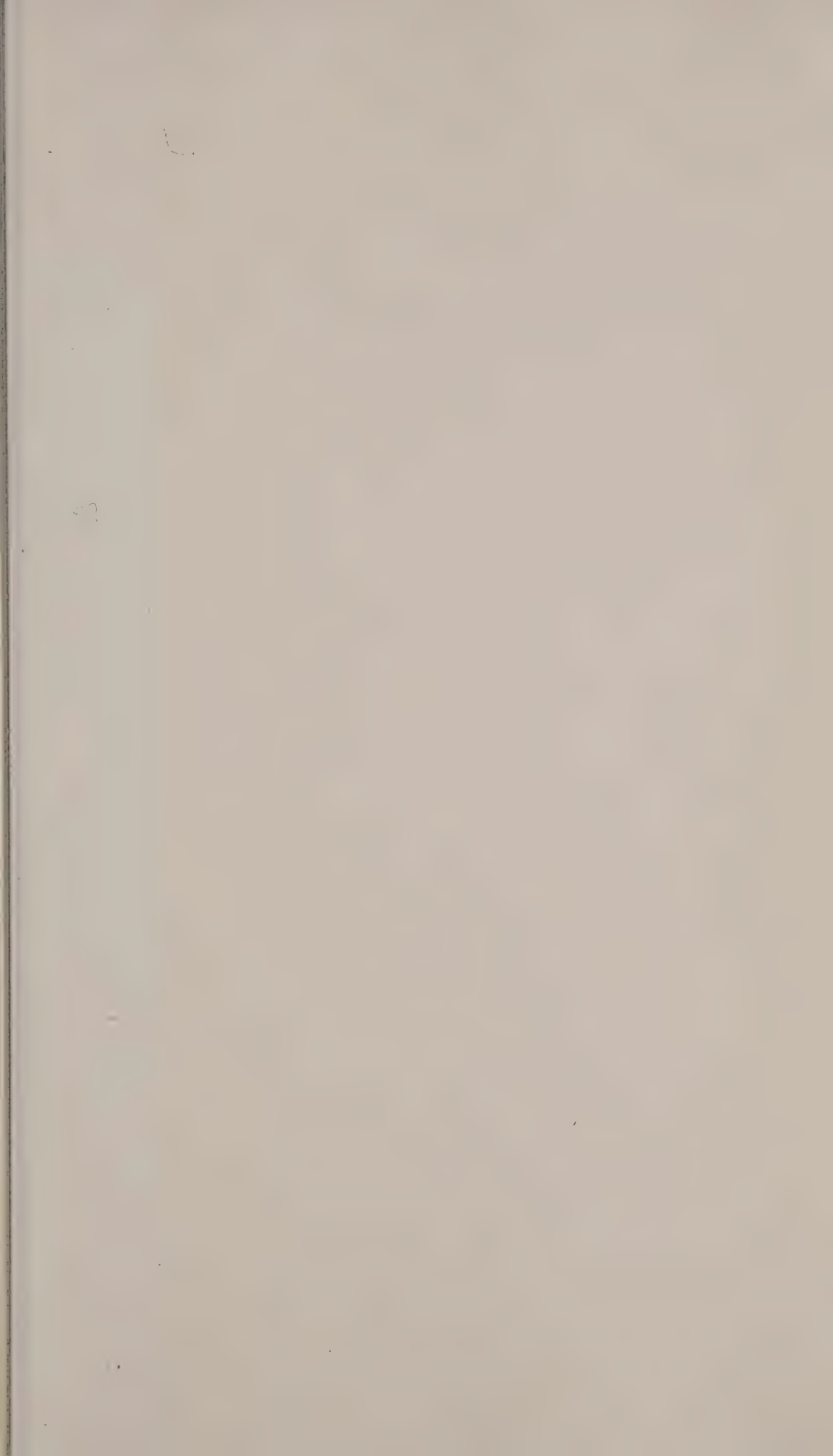
Wayne had foreseen this probable fate for their well-loved town; they immediately made all desired public improvements and sold them to Fort Wayne at a satisfactory figure. The electric lighting system and waterworks were the most conspicuous examples of this. In the summer of 1894 the city council of Fort Wayne entertained a resolution, June 29, known as General Ordinance No. 8, sponsored by George H. Leach, C. H. Waltemath and Anthony Kelker. After many references to committees and many meetings had been held between the committees and the citizens of South Wayne, the committee reported favorably; the territory was declared annexed August 14, 1894. This was approved August 28, 1894. The resolution demanding an ordinance was introduced by John Mohr, on June 12, 1894. The bonded indebtedness was \$15,800, the floating debt with interest to September was \$1,686.56, and the cash on hand was \$806.17. At this time C. B. Oakley was mayor of Fort Wayne and W. I. Jefferies was city clerk. On September 1, 1894, at the last meeting of the board of the town of South Wayne, which had already been annexed to Fort Wayne, all members being present heard a report of the financial standing of South Wayne read by Theodore Thorward, treasurer and clerk. J. M. Henry, president then adjourned the meeting sine die.

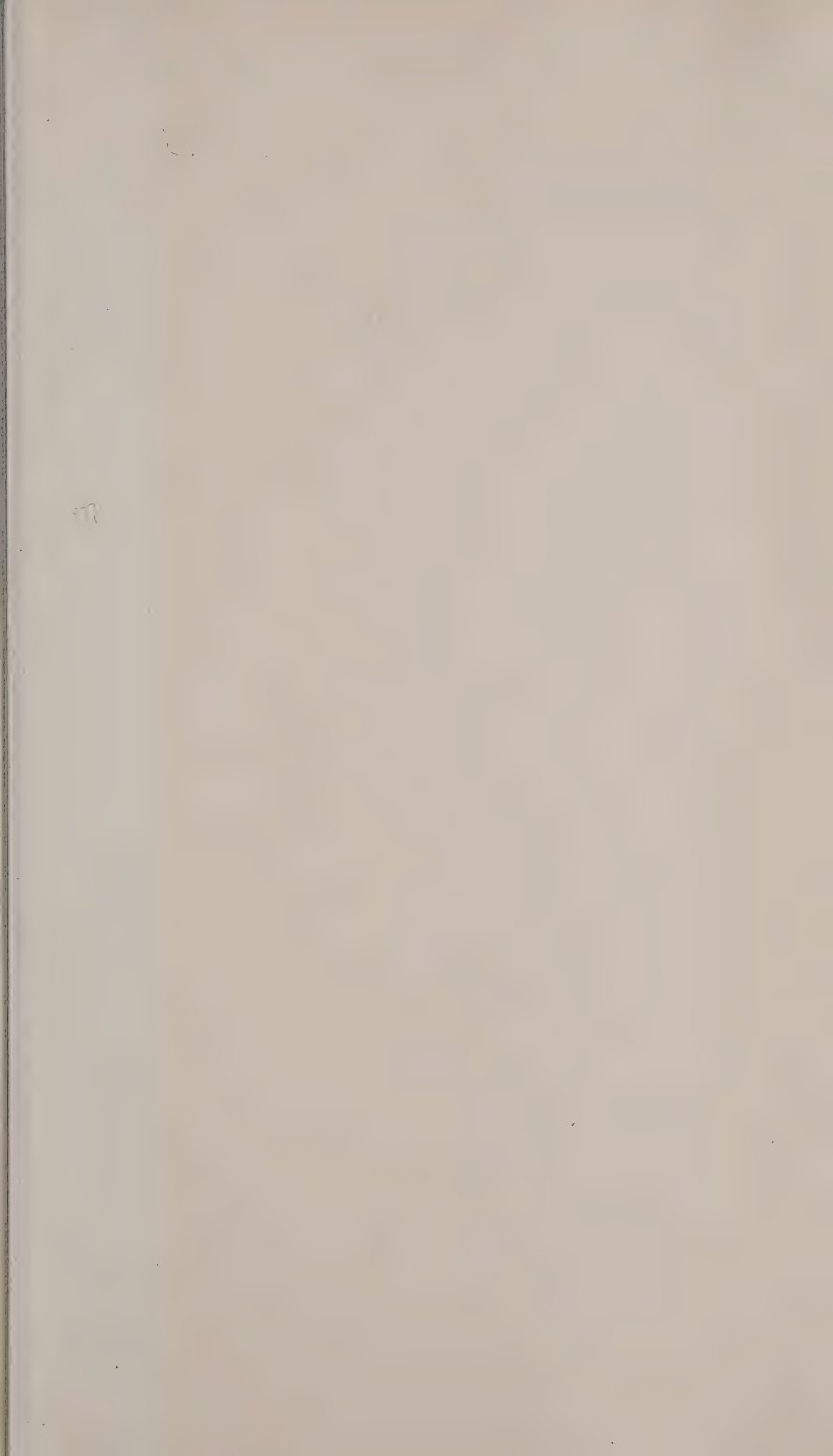
Cyrus Fairfield, Byron Thompson, John Ferguson, the three names that figured in the history of South Wayne, also figured in the later history of Fort Wayne. All had extensive and arduous business interests which required their best efforts. The transition from the past to the present and the future was very aptly expressed by Mr. Fairfield in his remark, "I am a stranger in Fort Wayne today, knowing ten in Lindenwood to one upon the street."

South Wayne prospered and developed as a part of Fort Wayne. The prairie land and corn fields gave way to beautiful boulevards, palatial residences in

beautiful and carefully kept grounds; the log cabin grocery store and city hall were supplanted by magnificent public buildings; important factories took the place of the small soap factory and grist mill, and the wolf trap evolved into the burglar alarm. Over all, however, some of the stately old trees that, in early days, made the forest south of the old stockade one of the most beautiful spots in the country round, long remained to make South Wayne the "town beautiful" which its progenitors planned.

In a few years the Lutheran Hospital, the South Wayne School, the West Creighton Avenue Church of Christ, the Emmaus Lutheran Church, the Packard plant, and the Fort Wayne Bible Institute became part and parcel of the annexed community of South Wayne.





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